



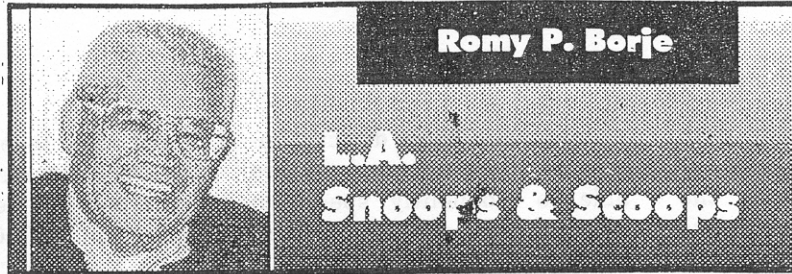
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'Historical' injustice to WWII Fil-Am veterans

The fight is unrelenting! The reminiscences of the horrific war still haunts us. These veterans – the Filipinos – were promised equity and justice vis-à-vis their American counterparts, but zero... nil, nothing at all! But these patriot, fighting age and ailments continue with unbowed heads, are still fighting in times of peace.

President Roosevelt inducted these Filipino soldiers into the US Army in 1941. In 1946 the United Congress passed the Rescission Act, which declared for legal purposes, notwithstanding any historical facts, classified them as not active in the service. Congressman Bob Filner one of the stalwarts fighting for equity and justice for these veterans said that "I want you to think of justice, of morality, of dignity, and of honor. I have spoken literally to hundreds and hundreds of Filipinos involved in the effort about the issue. I've been to the Philippines. I've celebrated Bataan Day on Mount Samat. I've visited the POW camp in Tarlac. There is scarcely a Filipino family alive today, either in the United States or in the

Philippines that does not include a World War II veteran or the son or daughter of a veteran.

"Fifty years of injustice still burn in the hearts and in their memories. They want justice in their last years, and it is time that this country adequately recognizes their contributions.

"Recognize the injustice, and act to correct it. We must do this to establish our honor and the honor and dignity to these veterans.

"To those who ask if we can afford to redeem this debt... We can't afford not to."

Well said, Congressman Filner. Nonetheless an appropriate revelation of an undying spirit of this issue, the Erasto R. Batongmalaque Foundation, headed by its program director Dr. Jenny Batongmalaque, spearheaded a salute to the United States Armed Forces of the Far East at the Patriotic Hall Auditorium, Los Angeles, on July 26th.

The program was an eloquent symbol of the remaining and surviving WWII leaders participating in a peaceful war. Commander Leonardo

Padilla of the America Legion #464, Manila Chapter, said that "up to the very last breath, to the last gasp in my death bed, I'll remember this act of patriotism and honor we shared with our common ally, the United States of America."

Salient point of the program were the invocation by Col. Joseph Smith, director of the Patriotic Hall; and a special music contributed by a bagpiper, Sgt. William Dean.

Veteran Jaime Carreon distributed a primer on "The Rise and Fall of the United States Armed Forces of the Far East," and also the History of the World War II by Lt. Mark Susuki and his team; and books of Lt. Ramsey's War.

The attendees represented 80 percent who were former members of the United States Armed Forces of the Far East, in the neighborhood of 100. Supervisor Michael Antonovich of the county of Los Angeles was also present. Major Ralph Ramirez, director of the California Military History and Museum Educational Program opened the rites by calling Lt. Susuki and his team to post the colors. They were ac-

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accompanied with music from bagpiper St. William Dean.

A stirring tribute to the American flag, with the Pledge of Allegiance. Supervisor Antonovich extolled the heroism of the Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor. He presented a colorful Board Commendation.

Col. Tom Lasser read the letter of commendation from Gov. Gray Davis; Kirsten Garvey represented Sen. Dianne Feinstein. Certificates of appreciation were given. The City of Carson also gave certificates of appreciation to all speakers.

Acting Philippine Consul General Ruth M. Prado lighted a candle symbolic of the presence of the living, and those who died in battle, the prisoners of war and the missing in action. Consul Prado gave tribute to all those who fought for the United States Armed Forces of the Far East, and not to forget those who have opted not to be American citizens and have remained in the Philippines.

A full-length video was shown by the film director and editor Robert Navarro. In this connection, Major Ramirez opened the program of "Day of Oral Historians."

He said that today is the day for oral historians, the

persons who were directly involved in battles and so are able to eloquently speak on what transpired and the travails of fellow combatants.

Major Cres Abad validated his being in a global war when he was assigned as field artillery of the 301st division. He described the surrender, the 60 to 80-mile Death March and the train that brought them to Camp O'Donnell.

General Tagumpay Victor Nanadiego, started as a buck private, an enlisted man. He was studying law and had been a member of the ROTC at the outbreak of war. He was assigned in the motor and transport pool of the 31st division, the all-American division under the command of Gen. Clifford Bluemel.

Col. Edwin Price Ramsey who was then an officer of the 26th division of the United States (Horse) Cavalry at the outbreak of war. He said that when the food rations were cut into half, they had to slaughter their horses to keep the men alive. He was the last to lead the charge of the mounted horse cavalry and the last survivor as officer. Prior to the surrender, he escaped Bataan and succeeded in going through enemy lines in the

dark. He, together with Col. Thorphe, started the guerrilla movement in Central Luzon. It grew to 40,000 men by the time the American forces arrived to liberate the Philippines in 1945.

The last keynote speaker the program was Dr. Leter Tenney. He was then in the National Guard for a year, newly married and went to the Philippines to finish his required duty. World War II caught up with him in the Philippines. He was a tank operator of the 192nd division. He sensed at the start of war that their tanks were outnumbered. He recited the refrain of the "Battling Bastards of Bataan." "No Mama, No Papa and No Uncle Sam..." He went to the horrors of the Death March. He witnessed the beheadings, civilians who were giving them food along the way were bayoneted or struck down. "I repeat," he said, "the defenders which is featured in his book, with same title.

of Bataan did not surrender. They were made to surrender."

He has a class action suit pending against the Japanese corporation that enslaved the American POWs. He read his poem "My Hitch in Hell,"